

BOLSA CHICA WETLANDS STEERING COMMITTEE



California State Lands Commission ➤ United States Environmental Protection Agency ➤ California Department of Fish & Game ➤ United States Fish and Wildlife Service
California Coastal Conservancy ➤ National Marine Fisheries Service ➤ California Resources Agency ➤ United States Army Corps of Engineers

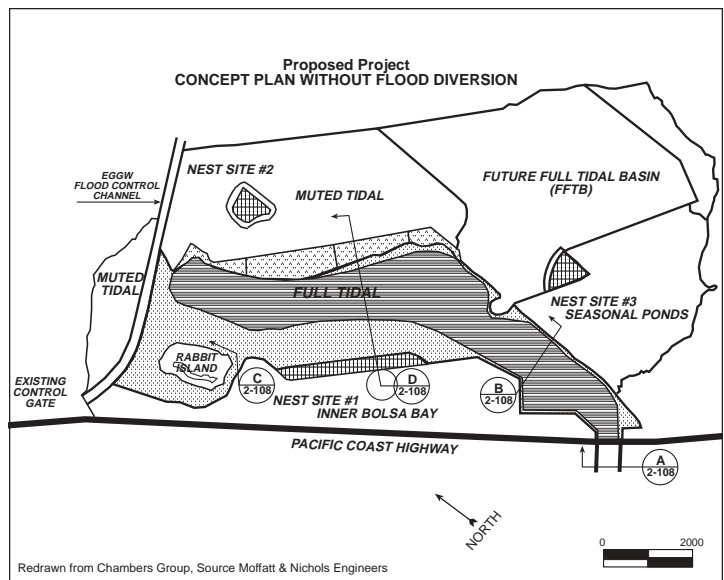
WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING AT THE BOLSA CHICA WETLANDS

It's been some time since we have taken the opportunity to report on activities of the Bolsa Chica Lowlands Restoration Project. Some of you may not have received copies of the earlier Newsletters we prepared. You are getting this edition either because of your expressed interest in the restoration or you live in the neighborhood and may be affected in some way by the restoration activities.

It's been an exciting time for the Bolsa Chica Wetlands Steering Committee as it has completed preliminary design, obtained permits and approvals, prepared to initiate the construction phase. Please take the opportunity to review the information in this Newsletter and, if you have any questions, please contact a member of the Steering Committee. Committee members and their contact information can be found on the last page.

BOLSA CHICA PLANNING CONCLUDES, IMPLEMENTATION BEGINS

After more than five years of extensive effort, public meetings, planning sessions, engineering design and environmental review, the Bolsa Chica Lowlands Restoration Project enters the final design stages leading to actual construction work. Permitting is complete as discussed elsewhere in this Newsletter. State Lands Commission, Fish and Wildlife Service, and Corps of Engineers formally concluded the environmental analysis process with EIR/EIS certification and Record of Decision in Spring 2002. Much pre-construction activity is underway or will be in the near future. Citizens, neighbors and Bolsa watchers will begin to see the results of these years of effort on the part of the Bolsa Chica Wetlands Steering Committee and its constituent agencies. The beginning of this work will affect access and use of the area by the public as steps are taken to clear the site of unauthorized uses and grading activity in preparation for construction. Also, we hope to begin reducing access to the northeast corner of the site in the near future because opportunistic trespass is damaging habitat. We ask for the public's cooperation during this period.



PUBLIC EVENT TO INAUGURATE RESTORATION PROJECT

The Bolsa Chica Wetlands Steering Committee, along with the city of Huntington Beach, Aera Energy LLC, and the US Army Corps of Engineers will hold a public event to initiate the Phase I work of restoring the Bolsa Chica lowlands. The event will include recognition of longtime supporters of the Bolsa restoration, granting of the necessary Corps of Engineers permits, start of abandonment and removal of the oil facilities, and progress with agreement on the environmental clean up of the site. A specific date and location for the event will be announced later.



CALIFORNIA CONSERVATION CORPS REMOVES OLD POWER POLES

Starting in April 2002, members of the California Conservation Corps began removing abandoned, standing power poles from the Bolsa lowlands. The poles have provided roosting and observation posts for predatory birds that attack the rare and endangered birds using Bolsa for nesting and rearing of young. Led by Crew Chief Jabari Williams, the Corps removed and sawed up more than 225 poles. Measures were taken during the work to protect the environment by collecting any toxic material (sawdust) that might contain chemicals used to preserve the poles.



Many of the poles were taken by the Department of Fish & Game for reuse elsewhere in dry locations. The poles formerly were used to carry wires providing electricity to oil wells and other equipment on the site. Poles have been made available for re-use through the Integrated Waste Management Board's CALMAX website to facilitate the recycling of the materials. The oil company, as part of the 1997 Agreement whereby the State acquired the property, provided funds for the pole removal.

FIRM SOUGHT FOR FINAL DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION MANAGEMENT WORK

On August 1, 2002, the U. S. Fish & Wildlife Service advertised for qualifications from firms interested in contracting for preparation of final engineering design and specifications for the restoration project. Work will include not only the design and specifications, but also bid documents. Under a separate work order, the firm may also be asked to do construction management of the restoration contract. Under the 1997 Agreement, the Service is to oversee the final design phase and contracting for

the restoration effort. Standard government contracting procedures will be followed with a joint federal/state selection review team making recommendations for final selection of the design firm. Selection of the contractor is expected shortly after the end of 2002 with final plans completed by September 2003. The contractor should be on board to start actual construction October 2003. The work is estimated to cost about \$75 million and take three years to complete.

ENVIRONMENTAL RISK ASSESSMENT COMPLETED

The Steering Committee has completed the preparation of the Environmental Risk Assessment (ERA). The information provided by the ERA will be used by the Steering Committee to develop clean up goals for the site. Clean up activities will be the responsibility of the former owners who will prepare a clean up plan for consideration by the Regional Water Quality Control Board. Delineation sampling and verification will proceed as the clean up activities progress. A copy of the ERA is available for review at the Huntington Beach Central Library, 7111 Talbert, Huntington Beach. Copies on CD (format) may be obtained from Jack Fancher (see Members List, page 4). The Executive Summary can be seen at the following websites: www.slc.ca.gov or www.swr.ucsd.edu/hcd/bolsa.

ENVIRONMENTAL PROCESS AND PERMITTING

The Final EIR/EIS provides a very solid basis for final decision-making and issuance of permits for the proposed project. FWS submitted applications to both the Corps of Engineers Regulatory Branch and to the California Coastal Commission in spring of 2001 for the proposed project. In August 2001, a public workshop was conducted by the Coastal Commission wherein they provided guidance about specific Coastal Act issues to be considered during the final hearing. In November 2001, the Coastal Commission voted unanimously to approve the FWS Consistency Determination. Specific plans for beach and biological monitoring were incorporated into the Project. Early in 2002, the Coastal Commission accepted more specific details of the dredge plan, confirming that the ebb shoal could be pre-filled with > 80% clean sand. While the Coastal Commission was acting, the Public Notice for the Corps of Engineers Clean Water Act, Section 404 permit was circulated for public review and comment. The Corps issued the permit to FWS and SLC in Spring 2002 for the proposed project. Also, simultaneously with the Corps permit process, the Regional Water Quality Control Board, Region 8, provided the Clean Water Act Section 401 Certification for the Project.

By dredging a total of about 2.7 million cubic yards of sediment, the desired habitat elevations would be contoured in the tidal basin, new levees and nest sites would be built, and 1.4 million cubic yards (cy) of clean sand would be used to pre-fill the ebb shoal and another 190,000 cy of sand would be used to build up the beach beside the inlet jetties. A section of Pacific Coast Highway would be elevated on a bridge over the new inlet and its jetties. The inlet location is at the south end of the Bolsa Gap where there are no State Beach structures. No alteration would be made to the East Garden Grove-Wintersburg Flood Channel by the wetland restoration project. Oil wells in the tidal basin and oil field contamination would be removed before the wetland restoration is begun. Before physical construction can begin, we must complete the construction plans and

specifications, then select the construction contractor(s), which is estimated to take a total of about 12 months. The current construction schedule calls for construction of berms and nest sites, french drains, and the PCH bridge in the first year. The ebb shoal would be pre-filled using an hydraulic dredge during the winter of the second year and the jetties would be built. If a third year is necessary, the tidal basin dredging would be finished and the inlet opened to the ocean. If physical construction begins in the Fall of 2003, it could be completed by 2006. Adopted project approximate acreages:

- Full Tidal basin gross ac 367
(~50ac cordgrass shelf, 175 subtidal, 60 intertidal mudflats, 63 intertidal saltmarsh, Rabbit Island upland 19)
- 3 nesting areas 20
- Muted Tidal (minus Fieldstone) 138
- Muted Tidal Pocket 42
- Future Full Tidal* 248
- Seasonal Pond* 139
- Flood Channel* 15
- Inner and Outer Bolsa* 210
- Fieldstone* 43
- Whipstock oil wells* 25

Total 1247

*areas not physically altered by the Proposed Project. Discussions continue regarding the acquisition of the Fieldstone property from Hearthside Homes.

Since 1997, FWS has monitored the breeding activity of the rare western snowy plover at Bolsa Chica. This plover breeding population was found to be one of the three largest of southern California. Although, snowy plover reproductive success seems to be slightly increasing, the superabundance of crows that prey upon plover eggs poses a continuing threat to the plover. Judicious predator management, nesting area preparation, and restrictions on construction activities are expected to make Bolsa Chica a much better place for the snowy plover to recover from the threat of extinction.



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